

Message Text

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15

ACTION AGR-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3694

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

USMISSION GENEVA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

UNCLAS BUCHAREST 3422

PASS AGR FOR HUME, G&F, F&O, S&TP, LD&P

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAID, EAGR, RO

SUBJECT: TRAVEL OBSERVATIONS ON ROMANIAN AGRICULTURE

REF (A) STATE 166994; (B) BUCHAREST 3418

1. AGAAT VISITED ROMANIA JULY 16-21 TO ASSESS CROP CONDITIONS AND IMPORT REQUIREMENTS. AREAS OBSERVED INCLUDE CARACAL TO BUCHAREST BY TRAIN; BUCHAREST-URZICENI-PLOIESTI-BRASOV-SIGHISOARA-MEDIAS-DEVA -ARAD BY HELICOPTER (THIS WAS ARRANGED BY THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND INCLUDED AMBASSADOR, AGATT, ECON OFFICER, AND FAO, WFP AND MIN. AGR. PERSONNEL); AND FROM BUCHAREST TO SLOBOZIA BY CAR.

2. HELICOPTER TRIP-SEVERE FLOOD DAMAGE TO ALL CROPS WAS OBSERVED NEAR URZICENI ON IALOMITA RIVER AND IN TIRNAVA MARE AND MURES RIVER VALLEYSHEROM SIGHISOARA TO ARAD
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(ABOUT 330 KILOMETERS). IN MOST FIELDS, FLOODS HAD

COMPLETELY DESTROYED CROPS; IN OTHER FIELDS YIELDS WILL BE SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCED. IN OTHER AREAS OBSERVED, POCKETS OF STANDING WATER ARE ADVERSELY AFFECTING CROP CONDITIONS. WHEAT AND BARLEY WERE READY FOR HARVEST WHEN STORM HIT, THEREFORE YIELD REDUCTIONS FROM LODGING AND SHATTERING ARE VERY LARGE AND GRAIN QUALITY IS POOR. HUNDREDS OF WORKERS WERE ATTEMPTING TO SALVAGE SOME OF THE LODGED, WATER-LOGGED GRAIN. WHEAT WAS BEING CUT BY HAND (OFTEN IN FIELDS WITH SEVERAL INCHES OF WATER), PLACED IN SHOCKS AND MANUALLY PUT THROUGH COMBINES. SINCE SMALL GRAINS ARE USUALLY HARVESTED IN ROMANIA WITH LOW MOISTURE CONTENT (12-14 PERCENT); GRAIN DRIERS ARE IN SHORT SUPPLY.

ATTEMPTS WERE BEING MADE TO AIR DRY THE UNUSUALLY WET GRAIN BUT THE HIGH HUMIDITY WILL PREVENT MOISTURE CONTENT FROM BEING BROUGHT BELOW ABOUT 18-20 PERCENT. POST-HARVEST LOSSES WILL BE UNUSUALLY LARGE AND SOME OF THE GRAIN IS UNFIT FOR LIVESTOCK FEED. THE GRAIN IN FLOODED AREAS HAS AN UNUSUALLY LARGE AMOUNT OF FOREIGN MATERIAL (MAINLY MUD AND WEEDS) THEREFORE ADDITIONAL CLEANING IS REQUIRED. IN ARAD COUNTY TEST WEIGHT OF WHEAT REPORTEDLY IS AS LOW AS 55 KILOGRAMS PER HECOLITER. YIELDS ARE 60 AND 55 PERCENT OF PLAN FOR WHEAT AND BARLEY, RESEPECTIVELY, OATS ARE IN BETTER CONDITION. LARGE AREAS OF ROW CROPS SUCH AS CORN, SUNFLOWERS AND SUGAR BEETS HAVE BEEN DESTROYED BY WATER OR COVERED WITH SILT. HOWEVER, IN THOSE FIELDS FROM WHICH WATERS RECEDED QUITE RAPIDLY SOME OF THE CORN CAN BE SALVAGED AS SILAGE OR GREEN FEED. GRAPES, FRUITS, VEGETABLES, POTATOES, HOPS AND FORAGE CROPS WERE ALSO BADLY DAMAGED.

3. GROUND OBSERVATIONS- WHEAT CONDITIONS GENERALLY IMPROVED AS ONE TRAVELED EASTWARD FROM CARACAL TO BUCHAREST. WHILE ABOUT TWO-THIRDS OF THE WHEAT HAD BEEN HARVESTED, MUCH OF THE REMAINING WHEAT WAS BADLY LODGED, WEEDY AND IN SOME CASES TOO WET TO HARVEST. EXCEPT FOR SOME SHOCKED BUT UNTHRESHED WHEAT, VIRTUALLY ALL OF WHEAT HAD BEEN HARVESTED EAST OF BUCHAREST. HARVEST IN THE SOUTHER PART OF ROMANIA REPORTEDLY BEGAN A WEEK EARLIER THAN NORMAL. WHILE HOT WEATHER IN EARLY JUNE ACCELERATED THE HARVEST, IT ALSO CAUSED SOME SHRIVELING OF KERNELS

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(ESPECIALLY THE SOVIET VARIETIES). CORN TO THE WEST OF BUCHAREST WAS UNEVEN AND SOMEWHAT YELLOW FROM EXCESS MOISTURE. IN THE POORER STANDS, PART OF THE DIFFICULTY IS DUE TO POOR SEED AND INADEQUATE FERTILIZER APPLICATION. MANY STANDS CONTAINED AN UNUSUALLY LARGE AMOUNT OF VOLUNTEER SUNFLOWERS. EAST OF BUCHAREST, MOST CORN WAS IN VERY GOOD CONDITION AND ABOVE AVERAGE YIELDS CAN BE EXPECTED IF WEATHER IN LATE JULY AND AUGUST IS FAVORABLE. HOWEVER, A

ALONG THE IALOMITA RIVER, SOME CORN HAS BEEN LOST. SUNFLOWERS FROM CARACAL TO BUCHAREST WERE UNEVEN AND SHOWED STRESS FROM EXCESS MOISTURE. MOST STANDS WERE IN FULL BLOOM AND WERE VERY WEEDY. BETWEEN BUCHAREST AND SLOBOZIA SUNFLOWERS WERE BETTER THAN TO THE WEST. HOWEVER, THERE WAS GREAT VARIABILITY BETWEEN FIELDS. HEAVY RAINS WERE RECEIVED DURING THE EARLY FLOWERING STAGE (LATE JUNE AND EARLY JULY) AND HOT HUMID WEATHER HAS CONTINUED WELL INTO JULY. THESE CONDITIONS TOGETHER WITH THE HEAVY WEED INFESTATION COULD CAUSE ABOVE NORMAL AMOUNT OF DISEASES. SOYBEANS WERE GENERALLY LESS THAN A FOOT TALL AND VERY YELLOW. YIELDS PROBABLY WILL BE SLIGHTLY BELOW NORMAL. CASTOR BEANS OBSERVED HAD GERMINATED POORLY BUT DID NOT APPEAR TO BE HURT BY HIGH MOISTURE. SUGAR BEETS WERE 12-18 INCHES TALL, HAD GOOD COLOR BUT WERE EXTREMELY WEEDY. ALFALFA AND OTHER FORAGE CROPS WERE IN GOOD TO EXCELLENT CONDITION. STANDS WERE A LUSH GREEN AND WERE VERY CLEAN. EARLY PLANTED CORN FOR SILAGE WAS IN GOOD CONDITION. HOWEVER, LATE PLANTED CORN HAD GERMINATED POORLY DUE TO WEATHER CONDITIONS AND/OR POOR SEED QUALITY. ROMANIANS HOPE TO RECOUP SOME OF THEIR LOSSES BY INCREASING THE AMOUNT OF DOUBLE CROPPING. THIS IS A CALCULATED RISK IN THAT THESE CROPS COULD BE CAUGHT BY FROSTS PRIOR TO MATURITY. HARVEST OF SOME FORAGE CROPS APPEARED TO BE DELAYED BY ALL-OUT EFFORT TO SALVAGE AS MUCH WHEAT AS POSSIBLE.

BARNES

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